

# Welcome to Session # 2005

Making Employment Programs that Work for Everyone

Please have a seat and check in via the conference app.

The presentation will be starting shortly.

If we are have technical difficulties,  
someone please help us.



# MHID

Nueces Center for  
Mental Health and Intellectual Disabilities

# Making Employment Programs that Work for Everyone



# MHID

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**Nueces Center for  
Mental Health and Intellectual Disabilities**

**Presented by: Gina Pena, IDD Service Director  
Melinda Garza, AES Manager  
Ryen De Jesus, Guiding Point Manager  
Adrian Alvear, Apprenticeship Program Supervisor**

# PRESENTATION OBJECTIVES

- Define the Employment First Perspective and recognize the importance of Competitive Integrated Employment.
- Share some of the limitations of the employment service options available through HHSC and TWC-VRS
- Provide an overview of other state and federal disability employment programs
- Give examples of how Nueces MHID has effectively implemented these programs
- Show how the programs can positively impact your consumers and your Center's bottom line

# WHAT IS EMPLOYMENT FIRST?

Perspective – a mindset that we all work from

Concept – Employment is the first and preferred option

Assumes – People with disabilities can work

HHSC – All persons receiving HHS services are offered the option to work

Services are put in place to support an individual to achieve their employment related goals

# COMPETITIVE INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT

Full, part-time, or self-employment

Pays minimum wage or above

Same benefits and chances of promotion

Not paid through an agency/program specifically for persons with disabilities

Works in an integrated setting

# WHAT ARE THE EXPECTATIONS FOR IDD

For anyone with a disability that is seeking employment assistance, we first refer to Texas Workforce Solutions – Vocational Rehabilitation Services

For Individuals in Home and Community-based Services (HCS) or Texas Home Living (TxHmL) there are waiver services available

General Revenue (GR) funded Vocational Training

# TEXAS WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS -VRS

Anyone over 22 interested in CIE should be referred to TWC-VRS

- Individuals in waivers must be referred

Services help people with disabilities prepare for, find, keep and advance in CIE

- Have a disability, which results in substantial barriers to employment
- Require services to prepare for, obtain, retain, advance
- ***Are able to*** obtain, retain, or advance as a result of services.

*Services are time-limited*

# WHAT DOES VRS PROVIDE?

- Vocational Counseling & Guidance
- Referrals for hearing, visual, or other exams
- Rehab devices, hearing aids, etc
- Therapy to address a disability
- Med, psych, and voc assessments
- Assistance with college, technical, or OTJT, and internships
- Job coaches and supported employment
- Pre-employment transition services for students
- Return to work, job retention and placement assistance
- Transportation assistance and vehicle modifications
- Referrals to other agencies and organizations



# REFERRING TO TWS-VRS

The individual should contact TWS-VRS to schedule an appointment to apply for services. In all programs the SCs should refer. In waivers the provider is responsible for support with transportation to/from/during. Accommodations available. Family or SC can attend.

Apply online at: <http://www.twc.Texas.gov/VRNearMe>

Call: Your local office or the hotline: 1-800-628-5115

Go by: your local/regional Texas Workforce Solutions office

# VRS OUTCOMES

## Denied Services

- Denial letter
- Individuals can appeal, within 180 days
- If no, and in one of the waivers there are other options

## If Approved

- Then a VRC will develop an Individualized Plan for Employment.
  - Goals for employment
  - Services needed to support
  - Set time-frames
- If times are exceeded or goals are met, then will be discharged

# WHEN DENIED/DISCHARGED FROM VR

If they still want CIE and are in HCS/TxHmL or PASRR

- Employment Assistance
- Supported Employment
- Provided by waiver providers

Barriers for providing EA/SE via waiver/PASRR

- Lack of staff – impacted by rates
- Higher needs come first
- Lack of trained/experienced staff
- Scheduling of staff

Result is even consumers with waiver services, don't always have access.

# WHAT ABOUT EVERYONE ELSE

## Interest lists for IDD waivers

- HCS – 123,589+
- TxHmL – 111,453+
- Oldest – 9/6/2007
- Wait 16.75 years

## Optional Contract Service – General Revenue Vocational Training

- Counts towards GR targets
- Must meet pri-pop & be admitted
- Paid or unpaid
- Can be CIE, at Center site, or other

GR is not always the safety net it is supposed to be.

# SO THEN WHAT?

Frequently, Service Coordinators or teams refer individuals to other organizations for employment services.

- Goodwill
- Lighthouse for the Blind
- Easterseals
- Peak Performers
- Quest
- Unique Employment

*Social Enterprises* – NPAs that provide employment for people with disabilities.

IDD is not always their specialty

# WHO HAS THE IDD EXPERIENCE?

Surprise – It is us! The LIDDAs.

*Instead of just linking to employment, we can also be a disability services employer. Not just an employer...*

The go to employment provider of choice for people with ID or DD.

# HOW HAS NUECES MHID DONE THIS?

- Advance Employment Services
- Guiding Point
- Apprenticeship Program



# MHID

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Nueces Center for  
Mental Health and Intellectual Disabilities

# Advance Employment Services

Melinda Garza, AES Manager



# ADVANCE EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

- Advance Employment Services (AES) internal employment program at Nueces Center for MHID
  - IDD General Revenue or MHID Internal Waiver Consumers
  - PASRR or adult MH (in certain situations)
- Everyone, gets supports based on their unique needs
  - GR individuals
    - vocational training notes are entered to capture encounter data
    - via internal custodial or grounds maintenance crew or via external contracts
  - Internal waiver
    - can work on any of these crews as well, only considered employment

# FOCUS OF AES

- Vocational training with goals to lead to employment in community-based worksites and integrated community employment.
  - CIE is offered first and repeatedly while working through AES
- Increase skills and provide vocational training of soft skills and hard skills in a positive work environment.
- Build experience through real life work environments.
- Promotes training and employment opportunities that reflect an individual's choice and abilities.

# INTERNAL AGREEMENTS

- AES provides services to other units and departments within our Center
  - Shredding
  - Custodial & Floors
  - Grounds Maintenance
- Internal agreements cover the cost of the services to the unit served
  - Staffing costs (DSP wages + benefits)
  - Consumer wages (@ state minimum wage)
  - Supplies & Equipment
- Why pay a vendor when we can help employ people who otherwise would not have a job?

# TEXAS WORKSWONDERS PROGRAM

- Operated by the Texas Workforce Commission
- Is the Texas State Use program which sets aside state contracts for Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs).
- Requires 75% of all labor hours on a contract to be provided by someone with a significant disability.
  - Individuals who are consider part of the disabled labor ratio must have disability documents in place and specific assessments completed annually.
- Must report labor ratio after the end of every state fiscal quarter.
  - Other information reported includes referrals to CIE, advancements within the organization, benefits offered, etc.

# WORKQUEST

- WorkQuest is the non-profit that coordinates contracts between the state agencies and the Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs)
- There are over 115 CRPs in the state of Tx, that employ over 6,300 persons with significant disabilities
  - 1469 Mental Health
  - 963 Intellectual Disability
  - 507 Learning Disability
  - Over \$64 million in wages annually to persons with disabilities

# MHID'S WORKQUEST CONTRACTS

- MHID/AES is a CRP with the WorkQuest/ WorksWonders program through the Texas Workforce Commission.
- Two contracts with the Texas Department of Transportation:
  - Grounds maintenance for TxDOT Offices and equipment yards
  - Highway Litter Pickup
- Pricing the contract
  - Program Manager costs are factored in for oversight
  - Staff/DSP wages are priced as on-site leads
  - Individuals wages are priced as crew members
  - Costs of equipment, supplies, vehicles, etc are priced into the contracts
  - Overhead/Administration

# PROGRAM STATS

## AES Employs:

- 20+ part-time individuals with IDD
- 1 PT driver with a disability (MH or other)
- 5 DSP'S (Trainers)
- 1 Custodian
- 1 Custodial Vocational Manager

## Grounds Maintenance Contract

- 2-year contract over \$100k

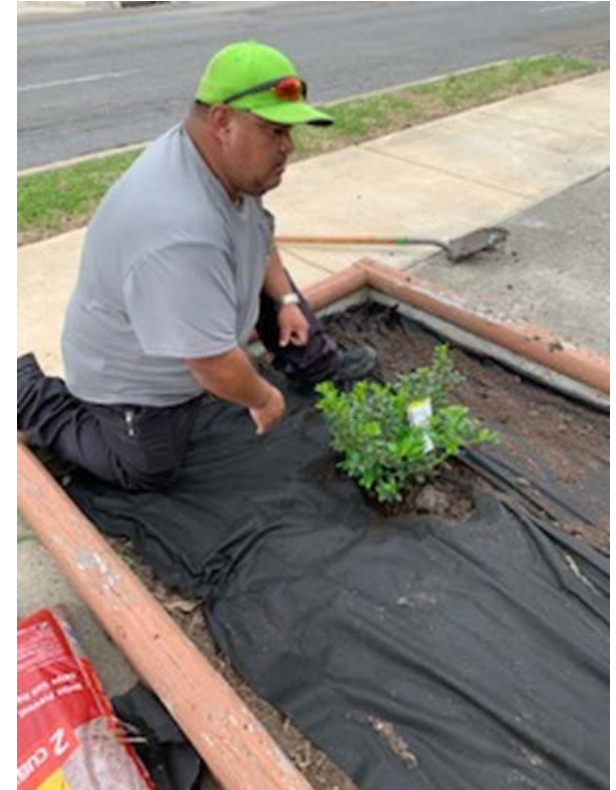
## TxDot Litter Contract

- Annual contract over \$225k

## Internal Agreements

- Cost for services budgeted in

Contracts have been in place for over 20 years



# TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION DESK REVIEW

- Audit conducted 8/30/2023 by WorkQuest
  - 100% Compliance
- 8 charts were reviewed
  - Diagnostic documentation present
  - Vocational assessment completed annually
    - Includes vocational goals
  - Have we offered CIE
  - IEEs present (required because of federal AOne contract)
- Also review for payroll, DL ratios, reporting requirements.





# BENEFITS FOR INDIVIDUALS

- Opportunity for independence and self-sufficiency
- Training for competitive employment
- Meaningful Employment
- Fair wages – state min or higher
- Sense of contribution
- Recognition at Annual Awards Ceremony in Austin



# WorkQuest

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# Testimonials

*"I love my job! I live on my own and hope to save enough money to buy a car one day. My job has taught me skills to make extra money over the weekend. I love to shop too!"*

Vicente M.



*"My job helps me to pay my cell phone bill so I can hang out with my friends on the weekends to sing karaoke. My job also helps me with any problems I am having so I can work."*

Christine M.



*"My job teaches me responsibility and different things I can apply at my ranch. I can buy things for my animals. My job gives me confidence to participate in committees at the Center. I am on the Planning and Network Advisory Committee for NCMHID where we talk about important things, I am the Team Lead of the Safety Squad, and Safety and Vocational Training Meetings. I was nominated for the Artie Lee Hinds Award Ceremony in Austin for outstanding employee of the year and received 2<sup>nd</sup> place statewide in Austin."*

Steven D.





# Advance Employment Services





# MHID

Nueces Center for  
Mental Health and Intellectual Disabilities

# Guiding Point Program

Ryen De Jesus, Guiding Point Program Manager



# WHAT IS ABILITYONE?

- Federal program that ensures certain federal contracts are set aside from traditional bid processes to provide for disability employment
- The AbilityOne Commission sets regulations by which the participating non-profit agencies must abide
  - NPA program requirements
  - Disabled Individual's eligibility requirements
- Selects the federal contracts which will be moved under the program and selects NPAs for specific contracts
- Provides oversight to the Central Non-profits and the NPAs

# LINES OF BUSINESS

As an NPA through the AbilityOne program, you can either provide a service to a federal agency or you can be a producing agency that supplies a product.

- Service Agencies

- Custodial/Floors
- Grounds/Landscaping
- Laundry
- Commissary/Food services
- IT Support/Calling centers
- Warehouse management

- Producing Agencies

- Clothing/Textiles
- Food Items
- Paper/cardboard products
- Office and other supplies
- Equipment
- Printed Materials

# SOURCEAMERICA

- The Central Non-profit agency that acts as an intermediary between the non-profit (MHID), the contractor (the government/CCAD), and the AbilityOne Commission
- Provides assistance, training, and guidance to the non-profits
  - SourceAmerica Academy
  - SourceAmerica representatives
- Provides oversight to the Central Non-profits and the NPAs
  - Conducts annual audit and survey to ensure compliance with the policies set by the AbilityOne Commission



# REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- Each NPA must report their total labor hours and the breakdown of non-disabled vs disabled labor (DL) for both the contract and all disability contracts each quarter = 75%DLH Ratio
- NPAs can also report the demographic information on their disabled individuals quarterly via the Quarterly Employment Report (de-identified)
- Each NPA must submit their representations and certifications annually
- If an NPA is out of compliance with the ratio, then they will be placed on a corrective action plan and will face additional reporting requirements monthly to show progress towards the ratio

# ABILITYONE AUDITS

SourceAmerica completes an annual AbilityOne Review of each contract and all AbilityOne program requirements

- Payroll
- Individual Employee Evaluations (IEE)
- Disability Documentation
- Ratio reporting
- Board Policies & Bylaws
- Safety plan, FMLA policy, Affirmative Action, Code of Ethics, ADA, etc
- Referral to CIE policy & procedures



# DISABILITY DOCUMENTATION

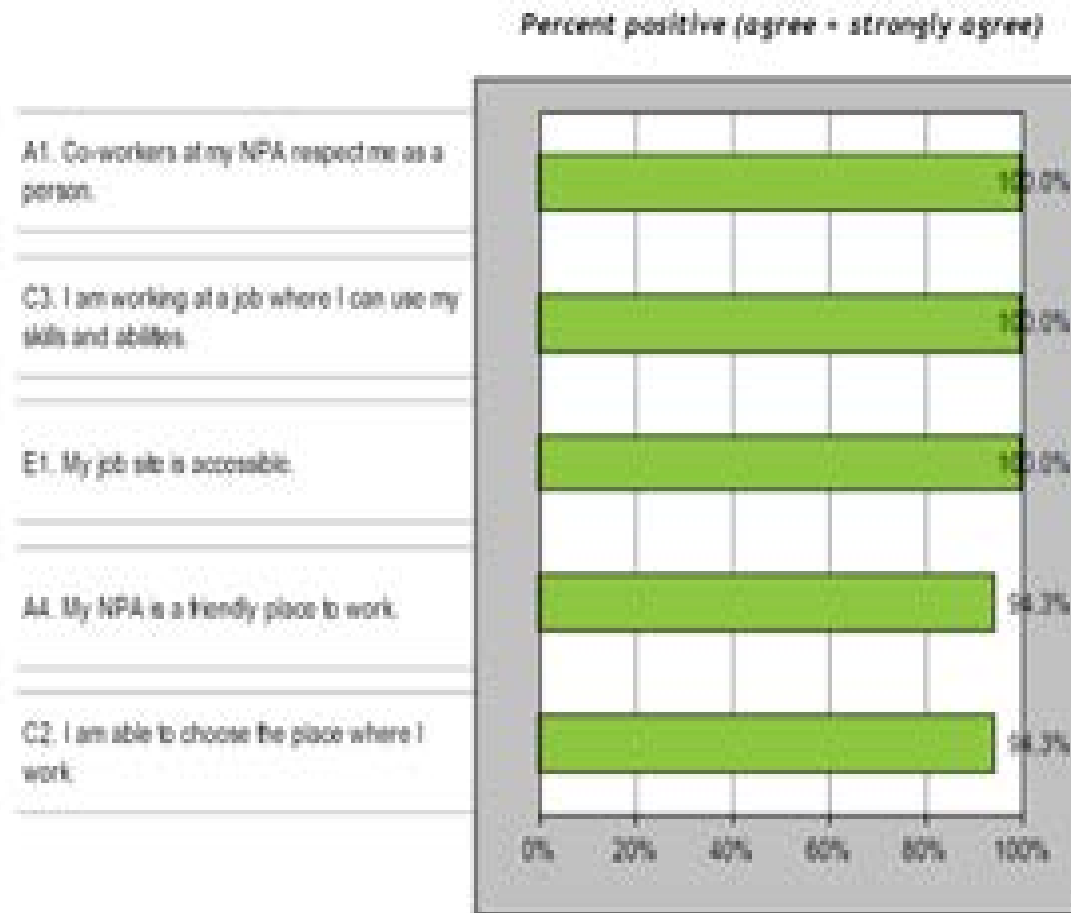
In addition to regular employment documents, two additional documents are required for DL:

- Documentation of a Disability – cannot be a DID
  - Document from a non-affiliated licensed provider
  - Diagnosis listed – duration, scope, extent
  - Impact to work
  
- Individual Employee Evaluation
  - Initial within 30 days
  - Annually thereafter
  - Completed by staff who are trained w/ certificate

# EMPLOYEE SURVEYS

## ➤ SourceAmerica AbilityOne Employee Satisfaction Survey

- Not annual, NPAs selected at random
- On site survey conducted to all contract employees a series of questions pertaining to employment satisfaction.
- Data from all surveys is compiled and used to improve the AbilityOne program.
- Your individual organization's data is sent only to you.



# GUIDING POINT

Nueces MHID's federal AbilityOne contract with a detailed scope of work providing custodial and floor care services to various areas throughout the Corpus Christi Army Depot (CCAD)

- Offices
- Breakrooms
- Conference rooms
- Restrooms
- Smoke shelters
- Hallways
- Elevators



# OVERVIEW OF GUIDING POINT PROGRAM

- Employment program for persons with significant disabilities - primarily employing the IDD population
- Considered employment; not a clinical service program
- Non-disabled staff are crew leads, provide coaching, redirection, minimal supervision per each individual's IEE and geared toward the contract SOW





# PROGRAM STATS

- Have maintained the contract since the 90s.
  - Current base-year contract issued in 2020
  - Plus 4 option years
- Contract generates just north of \$2.7 million annually
- Our roster totals 72 employees
  - 54+ individuals with disabilities
  - 12 staff/crew leads (could be DL or non)
  - Inventory specialist
  - Administrative assistant
  - Quality Control Inspector/Safety Specialist
  - 2 Day Supervisors + 1 Floor Supervisor
  - Program Manager



# TOUR OF DUTY HOURS OF OPERATION

## ➤ Operate with two shifts

- 1st shift: custodial services
- Hours of operation: 0700 – 1530



- 2<sup>nd</sup> shift: floor care services
- Hours of operation: 1530 - 2400





# EMPLOYEE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

All AbilityOne employees must meet the disability requirements for program with adequate documentation

Whether disabled or non-disabled:

- Able to pass Center background requirements plus federal background check
- Able to meet the physical requirements of the position
- Must have current DL or ID
- Able to comply with Center, Guiding Point, and CCAD rules and regulations

Rules for each facility can defer depending on whether military, other federal, or a NPA owned production facility.



# BENEFITS FOR INDIVIDUALS

- Current pay is \$17.20/hr
  - Contract worker pay depends on contract/product/service and area
  - Increases may occur through federal executive order and/or through contract increases
  
- Health and welfare benefit
  - Additional \$4.23/hr earned by each employee to fund employee benefit package including medical, dental, vision, and voluntary life insurance.
  - Additional funds not used for benefits banked in retirement account.
  
- Partially integrated worksite
  - Crews may consist of a staff lead (non-DL or DL)
  - Crews are persons with disabilities
  - On integrated facility (CCAD) engaging with persons of all abilities

# BENEFITS FOR INDIVIDUALS

- Taking pride in being a part of a strong CCAD workforce supporting the largest Black Hawk production facility in the nation.
- Provides opportunity for CIE or staff positions within the program
  - Employees are able to familiarize themselves with the expectations of a workplace
  - All Individuals are eligible to promote to a staff/lead position
- Offers a positive transition into the workforce from various training programs and/or school systems
- Social interaction, positive self-esteem, ability to earn wages, contribute to family/society, significant enough pay and benefits to move off social supports and service if they choose/are able.

# BENEFITS FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION

- Significant source of revenue
- Provides immediate opportunities for employment of persons w/ disabilities
- Participation in the AbilityOne program via SourceAmerica provides:
  - Access to a training platform
  - Opportunities for financial assistance
  - Access to business development tools
  - Assistance when issues arise
  - Member of the National Council of SourceAmerica Employers



# A GREAT PLACE TO WORK!



# A GREAT PLACE TO WORK!

*"I've been working here for 20 years, now, and I love it!"*

- D. Medina

*"I love the parties!"*

- D. Calderon

*"I make more money than my mom!"*

- A. Cuevas

*"My favorite part of my day is clocking out and waiting for the bus with all my friends"*

- B. Davis



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# A GREAT PLACE TO WORK!





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# CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

*“I was so proud of our assigned crew!!! Our crew rules!!!!!! This speaks volumes for your staff! They are gems!”*

- Building 340 personnel

*“The place looks cleaner and brighter. Also, they were very kind and understanding as they had to do extra to work around/accommodate our night support schedule.”*

- CCAD IT Unit

*“Your teams are the best part of my day!”*

- CCAD Commander







# Go. Be a force.

<https://www.sourceamerica.org/>

**AbilityOne.gov**  
U.S. AbilityOne Commission  
An Independent Federal Agency



**AbilityOne®**

**PROGRAM**





# MHID

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Nueces Center for  
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# Apprenticeship Program

Adrian Alvear, Apprenticeship Program Supervisor

# APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM MODEL

- Paid apprenticeships for individuals with IDD out in the community
- Workforce development staff train on soft and skills, at the host site and in a classroom.
- Has a program manual and curriculum developed by HHSC, can be modified.
- Progress towards job description standards/skills are tracked.
- Upon completion the individual will graduate and receive a certificate.
- Develop a resume, apply for jobs, prepare for interviews, and linked to CIE after their graduation.

# APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM HISTORY

- HHSC community-based program that was modeled after a similar program operated from the State Supported Living Centers
- The program was originally set to be piloted by 5 Centers in 2020 – COVID impacted and only one was able to pilot that year - AACOG
- MHID came on as one of the 5 pilots in 2021, but did not get consumers at employer host sites until early CY22.
- First year, we also received funding for tablets to be used to supplement this or other vocational training/employment programs.
  - Training aids, comms devices, reminders, lists, work related apps, etc.
  - Also covered costs of other computer equipment, internet, etc.

# APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- Connects people to competitive integrated employment
  - Primarily serves individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
  - Can serve adults with mental health diagnoses
  
- 12-Month Program – up to two apprenticeships
  - Learn transferrable job skills in a real work environment
  - Facilitates teaching and learning through feedback
  
- Host-sites are located in the community based on the interests of individuals.
  - Job types or at least the skills being learned must be something that can transfer to the general workforce
  - Sites with multiple job types can be easier to work with

# PROGRAM BUDGET

- Staff Wages
- Apprentice Salaries
- Staff Travel
- Apprentice Transportation
- Supplies
- What isn't covered?

**Total Budget = Over \$220k per FY**

Spring = Jan 1 to Aug 31

Fall = Sept 1 to Dec 31

Start dates for each “session” are heavily impacted by when the HHSC contract and PO are issued.





# OUR APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

## MHID's Host Sites

Corpus Christi Bayfront Omni Hotel

Corpus Christi Animal Services (CCACS)

South Texas Botanical Gardens

Bethune Early Childhood Education Center

## Apprenticeship Program Participants

	Spring		Fall	
	Apprentices	Graduates	Apprentices	Graduates
CY22	8	5	6	5
CY23	6	4	5	3
CY24	9 so far	TBD	Recruiting	



# HOST SITE OUTREACH

- What do your individuals want to do/where do they want to work?
- Who has multiple job types in one location?
- Who wants to work with the program?
- How to engage with host sites?
- Sell the benefits to them
- Reassurances, but no guarantees
- MOU



# APPRENTICESHIP ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- 18+ and High School diploma or GED
- History of good attendance in other programs.
- Ability to have appropriate social, grooming and hygiene skills.
- Basic independent self-care skills.
- Basic communication skills w/ adaptive aids if needed.
- Be able to take direction and instruction from others.
- Desire to work in an integrated workplace.
- Not require enhanced supervision.
- Must be able to pass pre-employment screenings.



# ONBOARDING PROCESS

- Complete a program application
- Complete an employment application
- Participate in an interview with staff
- Recommend for hire & complete hire process
- Participate in classroom
- Recommended to host site & determine fit
- Schedule start date with host site & any training



# GETTING STARTED AT THE HOST SITE

- Determine any safety issues, PPE needs, train on before both in the classroom and via tours
- Review job description and identify hard/soft skills needed
- Stagger start individuals, allow for more intense 1-1 at start
- Provide coaching, guidance, training, redirect, reminders, prompts etc
- Work to ensure individuals become part of larger organization culture
- WDS fade out, individuals engage more with supervisors and mentors

# COORDINATING WITH HOST SITES

- Develop MOU and obtain consents
- Provide any needed information prior to start date
- Ensure individuals receive onboarding like other staff
- Have one primary POC and back ups for host site - HR
- Have day to day contacts such as supervisors, team leads, etc
- Ensure everyone knows who/how to contact in case of emergencies
- Provide frequent engagement, address concerns promptly, provide general education if needed/become a partner

# DATA AND REPORTING

Individual Daily Data Sheets – track individuals progress

Weekly summary sheets must be sent to the program liaison

Program data reports are due at the end of each program period.

Final Report due each CY includes:

- Challenges and successes in the classroom setting.
- Challenges and successes at the jobsites.
- A list and brief description of each apprenticeship type offered.
- Success stories
- A breakdown of Sustainability, Best Practices and Lessons Learned.
- A summary of the experience with this year's program.

# BENEFITS FOR INDIVIDUALS

- Paid work experience in the community
- Competitive, transferable, and marketable job skills
- Increased independence, confidence and self-esteem
- On-site instruction, support and within ADA
- Small group learning
- Twelve months of on-the-job learning
- Active life-skills training
- Practice interviews, feedback and assessment of skills with program and host employer staff
- Supported occupational work environment





# GRADUATE STORIES





# MHID

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Nueces Center for  
Mental Health and Intellectual Disabilities

# Focusing on Employment

Gina Peña, IDD Services Director

# EMPLOYMENT FIRST = EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FIRST

- If HHSC's focus is on employment first, we should make that a focus.
- Not just for our consumers, but also for our services.
- LIDDA and provider contract requirements are what they are, but service rates lag behind.
- Explore employment program options
- Follow the flow – Required to refer to VR, then tap into waiver/GR, then alternatives

# CONTRACTING WITH TWC-VRS

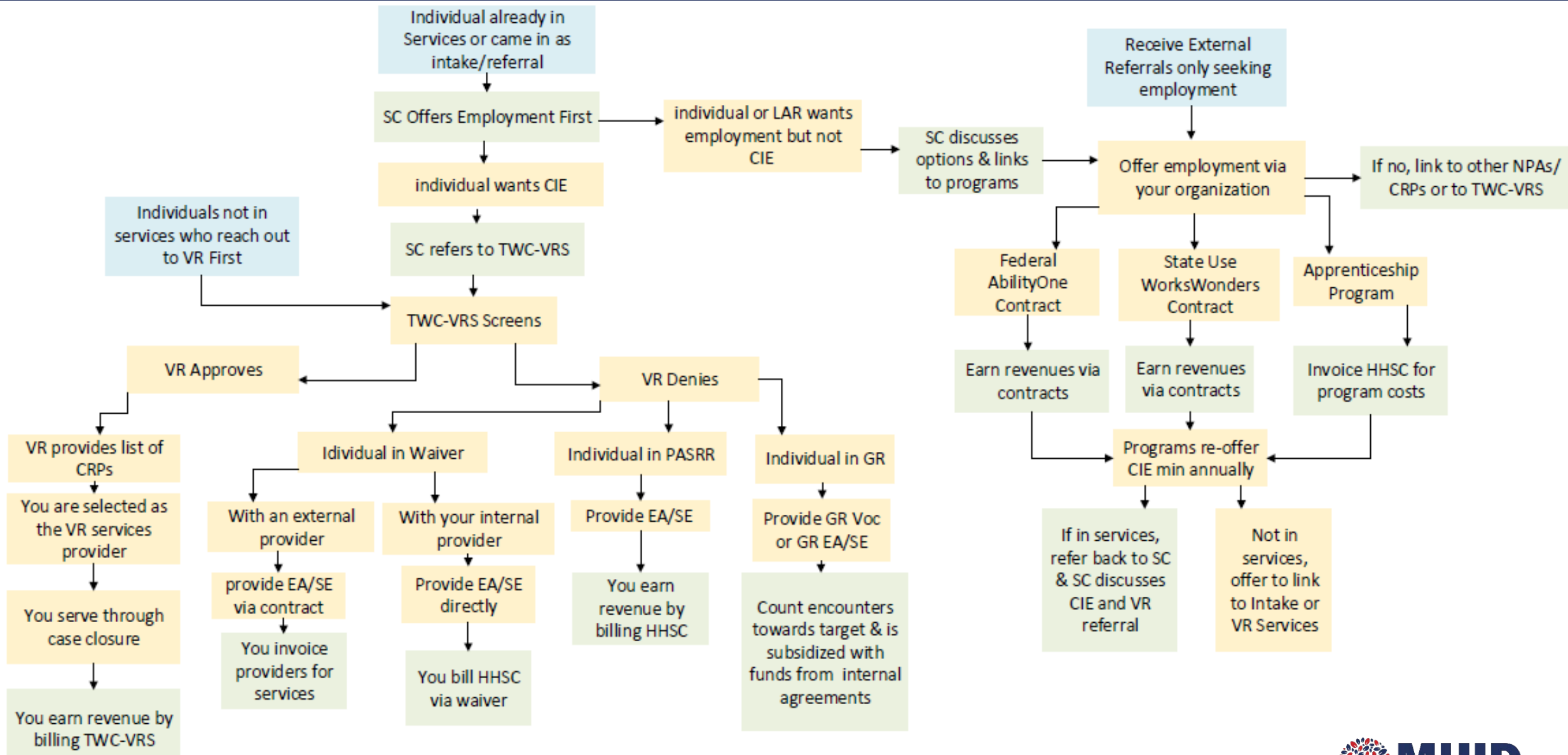
- Put a plan together
  - Contact your local offices
  - Presentation from TWC-VRS
  - Contract requirements & program rules
  - Develop a timeline
- Courses from University of North Texas
  - Program manual & flow chart
  - Know the benchmarks people must achieve
  - Determine when/who/how to bill
- Apply during enrollment period

Services	Unit Rate	Comments
Supported Employment Plan Meeting	\$184	May be purchased multiple times when authorized by an SA.
Supported Employment Job Development and Placement Benchmark	\$1,875	May be purchased multiple times when authorized by an SA.
Supported Employment Job Retention Benchmark	\$1,838	With SA, may be purchased multiple times and is paid every 28 cumulative calendar days.
Supported Employment Job Stability Review	\$184	May be purchased multiple times when authorized by an SA.
Supported Employment Closure Benchmark	\$3,675	May be purchased multiple times when authorized by an SA.

# CONTRACTING WITH WAIVER PROVIDERS

- Employment First is our perspective, but not all providers provide
- SE/EA through the waiver & PASRR are better funded services
- If we supplement salaries with other sources of revenue we can be cost effective
- If we also have staff that are well trained, then we can provide high quality services
- Market ourselves to provider agencies as a contractor

# MAXIMIZING BILLING & CLOSING THE LOOP





# RECAP

- Employment First Perspective should not be a perspective used only by SCs during planning.
- Competitive Integrated Employment is great, but isn't what everyone would choose.
- People should have access to employment services, but that isn't always the case.
- The Texas WorksWonders and federal AbilityOne programs are other disability employment options, and can be revenue generators too.
- Providing an array of services can help you become the provider of choice for disability employment.

# Questions & Discussion



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